

Inside Region 3

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External Affairs Office

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Interagency Agreement on U.S. Highway 12 Protects Threatened Habitat in Wisconsin's 'Last Great Place'

Five-Year Negotiations Avoid CEQ Referral

After nearly five years of negotiations involving the Service and federal and state agencies in Wisconsin, a formal interagency agreement was signed March 24 that will help protect wildlife habitat from secondary land-use changes spurred by a major upgrade of U.S. Highway 12 in the Baraboo Hills region of south central Wisconsin.

The proposed project will upgrade U.S. Highway 12 from two to four lanes along most of the 41-mile route between Middleton (near Madison) and Lake Delton, part of the Wisconsin Dells recreation area. The highway traverses two national trust resources, the Baraboo Range National Natural Landmark and the Ice Age National Scenic Trail.

The Baraboo Landmark is part of a 144,000-acre area known as the



Historic nesting habitat for the federally-listed peregrine falcon is located throughout the Landmark region.

Baraboo Hills, designated a "Last Great Place" by The Nature Conservancy.

Among the Service's concerns is the protection of forest resources within the Baraboo Landmark,

among the largest contiguous blocks of southern upland forest in the Midwest. The area provides habitat for numerous migratory birds and plant "Species of Concern," including the cerulean warbler, prairie thistle, bog bluegrass and Blandings turtle.

The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Service, Federal and Wisconsin Highway Administrations, National Park Service, Environmental Protection Agency, Wisconsin DNR, Dane and Sauk Counties and The Nature Conservancy creates a local advisory committee made up of members of each organization. The committee will review each phase of the highway project to determine impacts on wildlife resources and to decide on appropriate mitigation. The Council on Environmental Quality and Wisconsin governor's office were also involved in the negotiations.

The goal of all parties was to develop measures to ensure the sustainability and livability of the urban and rural communities and landscapes in the project area.

The MOA will be included as an attachment to the Record of Decision, and includes commitments for between \$10 - \$15 million for land acquisition and easements within the Baraboo Landmark, plus \$5.25 million for areas outside the Landmark. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation and the two counties will oversee the funds. (*Lyn MacLean, R3 Ecological Services*)

Agassiz's Moose Population Continues to Decline

Recent aerial surveys of Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge and surrounding state wildlife management areas by Refuge biologists indicate the moose population has declined 40 percent from last year's survey. The second of two winter 98-99 aerial surveys was completed in February.

The combined surveys indicate the

moose population on the northwest Minnesota refuge is about 50 animals, almost half the number from surveys conducted in 1994-95.

This year's results are disappointing, as Refuge staff had hoped the population decline had leveled off at 1996-97 survey levels—about 70 animals.

Moose continues on page 6

'Resource Conservation Priorities' Guides Care for 160 Keystone Species in Region

A team of Region 3 biologists has developed a guide to help Region employees prioritize their workloads and opportunities. The document, "*Resource Conservation Priorities*" is the first regional effort in the Service to focus on region-specific keystone species. The document identifies 160 species considered to be in the greatest need of attention under the Service's span of authority.

The priorities document was initially developed in response to regional Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) planning efforts. However, the identification of these keystone species also helps (1) direct the focus of the Service's



POLLINATOR-The Karner blue butterfly is one of 160 species listed in the Priorities document. (USFWS photo.)

many fish and wildlife conservation tools (authorities, programs and expertise), (2) identify research priorities and training needs, (3) assists in preparing refuge comprehensive con-

servation plans and ecosystem plans, and,(4) assist in developing budgets.

Additionally, consistent with the wisdom that restoring and conserving pollinators will be one of the most pressing challenges to maintaining biodiversity and healthy ecosystems in the next several decades, of the 160 species in this list, several are pollinators. These include: Karner blue butterfly, and Mitchell's satyr butterfly.

A "living" document, "*Resource Conservation Priorities*" is also being used by biologists to identify gaps in the list or any species, including pollinators, which must be considered key to this effort and key to the vitality of the region's ecosystems. (Charlie Blair, Sherburne NWR)

100,000 View Great Lakes Display at Michigan's Outdoorama

Twenty-three representatives from nine Great Lakes field offices, three Regional Office staff, and 12 members of the "Friends of the Shiawassee NWR," joined to host the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem Team exhibit at *Outdoorama* held recently in Novi, Mich.

The 10-day *Outdoorama* is Michigan's largest outdoors show, and is sponsored by the Michigan United Conservation Clubs. The Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem Team used the display to familiarize approximately 100,000 show visitors with the work of the Service in the Great Lakes area. The exhibit features large color photos, three-dimensional objects and an interactive puzzle to help educate the public. Brochures, posters, and booklets were also distributed. (Ed DeVries, Shiawassee NWR)

Chicago's WGN-TV Covers Service's Inspection of Live Cobra Shipment

What could have been a disappointing tale of death from neglect, ended with a rescue and new home for 30 cobras courtesy of a small Kentucky reptile zoo and Service Wildlife Inspectors.

The tale is believed to begin in Thailand, where 260 venomous kraits and cobra snakes were packed for shipment to food markets in Hong Kong and Canada. The snakes were seized enroute by customs officials in Singapore, where sale and shipment of the snakes for food is illegal. While awaiting disposition in Singapore, all the kraits, and most of the cobras died.

Somehow, the fate of the snakes was communicated to the Columbus Zoo, who in turn recommended the non-profit Kentucky Reptile Zoo rescue the snakes. The live, venomous snakes were imported through Chicago's O'Hare Airport, and declared to and inspected by Service



HANDLE WITH CARE-A snake handler from the Kentucky Reptile Zoo unwraps a cobra for Service inspection. (USFWS photo)

Wildlife Inspectors. Snake handlers from the zoo handled the snakes while inspectors worked from a relatively safe distance. Due to public interest in the story, WGN-TV televised the inspection for its newscast. (Keri Halpin, Chicago Inspection Program)

Visitors Learn to Build Backyard Prairies at Refuge Landscape Fair

More than 350 visitors learned about ecologically sound and cost-effective landscaping techniques and ideas at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge's recent landscape fair.

The fair was sponsored by the Sustainable Resource Center's Urban Lands Program and Friends of Minnesota Valley. Landscaping experts conducted workshops on creating backyard prairies, woodland gardens, and native plant identification. Visitors were invited to walk through the many displays set up by various landscape designers, lawn care services and organizations such as the Native Plant Society. Master gardeners also provided growing tips.

The workshops were videotaped by KSTP television (ABC network affiliate) and local cable television. (*Judie Miller, Minnesota Valley NWR*)

Windom Adds New Waterfowl Production Area; 60 Acres of Wetland Habitat to be Restored

A 240 acre tract was purchased as a Waterfowl Production Area in Freeborn County, MN. This will provide an opportunity to restore 60 wetland and 180 upland acres. The Windom WMD recently purchased the 240 acre Stallkamp tract located in the upper portion of the Blue Earth River Watershed in western Freeborn County, MN. Approximately 60 acres of wetlands will be restored for the benefit of waterfowl and other migratory birds, as well as provide water quality and flood water retention benefits. (*Steve Kallin, Windom WMD*)

Revised Recovery Plan Adds Specific Actions to Help Protect Great Lakes' Piping Plover

The East Lansing Field Office has distributed a draft of the Revised Great Lakes Piping Plover Recovery Plan to the Great Lakes Piping Plover Coordination Group. The revised Plan includes more specific actions to protect piping plover in the Great Lakes region. Specific tasks are directed at each member of the Coordinating Group, whose agencies include the Service, the National Park Service, the Michigan, Wisconsin and Ohio Departments of Natural Resources and the Bad River Indian Tribe. The Group will meet in April to discuss comments on the draft Revised Plan. The comments will be incorporated into the draft before the plan is released for public comment.



Piping plover.

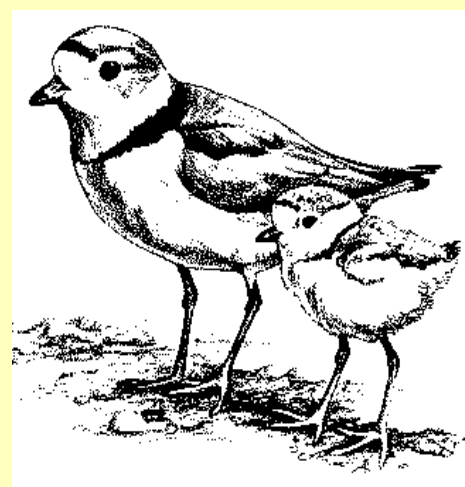
(USFWS photo)

Many of the specific protectionary tasks listed in the Revised Plan have already been implemented. The University of Minnesota, under contract with the East Lansing Field Office, is developing the recovery plan. (*Rachel Miller, East Lansing Field Office*)

Michigan Counties and Townships Become Partners For Piping Plover

East Lansing Initiative Aims to Increase Endangered Bird's Productivity on Private Lands

The East Lansing Field Office is enlisting the help of local governments in eight Michigan counties in an effort to protect piping plovers nesting on private lands. Field Office staff contacted county and township officials to educate them about the plight of the piping plover on private lands, where about 25 percent of piping plover nests are located. Productivity is lowest on private lands--well below the target of two fledglings per pair, per year. Service staff asked officials responsible for local zoning or building permits to encourage permit applicants to contact the Service before



USFWS Illustration

beginning construction to assure piping plovers are considered and nests protected. Contacted counties and townships were cooperative, and agreed to try the arrangement on a trial basis. (*Rachel Miller, East Lansing Field Office*)

Service Expands Role in Minnesota Partnership; Agreement Helps Add 380,547 Acres to CRP

Service, Minnesota Waterfowl Association and NRCS Add Incentives to Program

A Service-led agreement expanding technical and financial assistance offered to Minnesota landowners enrolling in the Conservation Reserve Program contributed to the recent acceptance of 380,547 acres during Signup 18 of the USDA program. The Minnesota lands were part of nearly five million acres enrolled nationwide by

the USDA during Signup 18.

The expanded partnership involving the Service, Minnesota Waterfowl Association (MWA) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was led by Lance Kuester, state coordinator for the Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.

In the agreement, the Service expanded its technical assistance to include reviewing engineering design and construction adequacy to enroll-ees choosing to restore wetlands and

wildlife habitat (CP-23) on enrolled lands. The MWA funded all, or a significant portion of wetland restoration costs after the application of USDA cost-share and incentive payments.

The expanded partnership agreement is response to recent policy changes in the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program, yet defines a level of involvement by encouraging wetland restoration on CRP lands through other funding sources. (*Lori Wolff, Minnesota Private Lands Office*)

Wolves Fitted With Radio Tracking Collars as Part of Three-Year Research Project at Agassiz

Researchers used a helicopter to help locate, capture and place radio tracking collars on four wolves from the Golden Valley pack on Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge recently. The three-day wolf capture and collaring effort is part of a three-year research project now in its final year at the Refuge.

Andreas Chavez, an Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) student, and Eric Gese, of Utah State University, were on site to direct and assist with the capture.

Only four of five wolves in the Golden Valley pack were captured, including the alpha male. The others were female pups. The alpha female was not captured as she had been previously collared. The alpha male was captured last year, but his tracking collar had been chewed off.

Extensive searches had been conducted from air and ground to

locate more wolves at Agassiz and Thief Lake Wildlife Management Area. None were found.

Two members of the Elm Lake Pack had been collared, but both had died from mange. Other members of the pack were observed this past summer, but it is believed they also

died of mange. A single set of tracks observed in the Elm Lake area may belong to a sole survivor of the Elm Lake pack, a visitor from the Golden Valley Pack, or a disperser from another area. (*Gary Huschle, Agassiz NWR*)

Deaths in Elm Lake Wolf Pack, Wolf Research Topics Bring News Media to Agassiz NWR

The apparent death by mange of two radio-collared gray wolves at Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge and other wolf research topics were the subjects of numerous media interviews conducted recently by Refuge biologists.

The Associated Press, Grand Forks Herald, Brainerd Dispatch and KKCQ radio interviewed Biologist Gary Huschle about the status of the wolf research at the northwest Minnesota refuge. The death of the radio-collared wolves from the Elm Lake Pack

were of particular interest, as it appears that all members of this pack may be dead. During a recent capture attempt by helicopter, tracks of only one animal were found in the area. This could be a pack survivor, an animal from a neighboring pack or a disperser from another area.

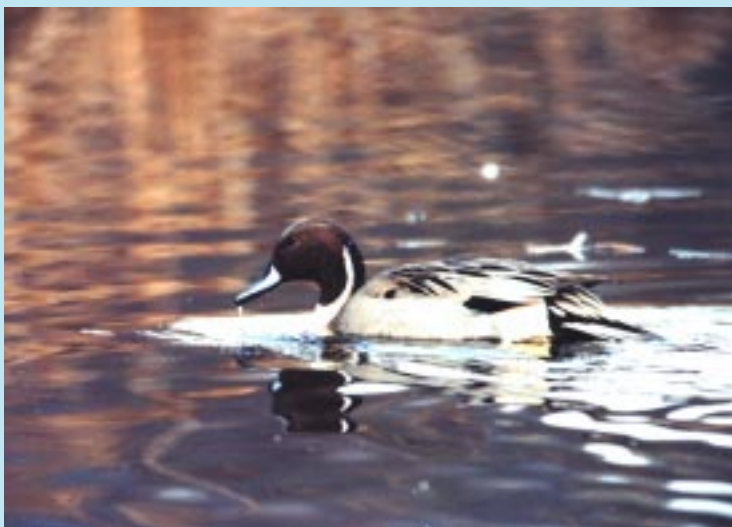
From a scientific standpoint, the documentation of death by mange was significant as there are very few documented cases of mange causing death in wolves. (*Gary Huschle, Agassiz NWR*)



FIRST PLACE, Refuge Waterfowl- Ron Reimer

Upper Mississippi Refuges Announce Photo Contest Winners

A photography contest highlighting the people, landscapes and wildlife of Refuges on the upper Mississippi River helped the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge- Winona District and Trempealeau NWR celebrate National Wildlife Refuge Week. The Bob Pohl Chapter of the Friends of the Upper Mississippi River NWR helped organize and publicize the event as well as furnish awards. Forty-two entries were received. Three local professional photographers judged the contest. The winning photos were displayed at Winona National Bank, Trempealeau NWR and Upper Miss.-Winona District. Several participants agreed to allow their photos to be displayed on Refuge kiosks, and in homepages and publications. (Robert Dreislein, UMN&WR)



SECOND PLACE, Refuge Waterfowl- Jerome Knabe



THIRD PLACE, Other Refuge Animals- Ron Reimer



SECOND PLACE, Other Refuge Animals- John Zoerb

Minnesota Valley Takes Comprehensive Conservation Planning Process to the Public, Schedule Announced

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge has announced the dates for the first round of meetings to explain the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) process and to capture the public's ideas and comments on the development of the plan. There will be one general briefing for non-profit conservation organizations and natural resource agencies and other governmental agencies. The refuge will host five open houses in several locations along the Minnesota River between Bloomington and Mankato. The technical planning teams announced the following briefing and series of open houses:

Wednesday, March 31, 1 to 9 p.m. Informal Briefing for non-profit conservation organizations and natural resource agencies at Minnesota Valley NWR Open Houses: Apr 27, 1 to 9 p.m., Minnesota Valley NWR Visitor Center, Bloomington; May 6, 1 to 8:30 p.m., Student Union, Mankato State University, Mankato; May 11, 1 to 9 p.m., Carver Village Hall, Carver; May 19, 1 to 9 p.m., Civic Center, Burnsville; May 25, 1 to 8:30 p.m., Don Nye Environmental Learning Center, Henderson. Partners include: Minnesota DNR's State Parks and Ecological Services Offices, Twin

Cities Field Office and Friends of Minnesota Valley (Judie Miller, Minnesota Valley NWR)

Minnesota Valley Refuge Plan Targets Hotel Guests and Employees

The Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge is launching an outreach effort with a nearby Hilton Hotel that aims to increase involvement of hotel employees and guests in Refuge events and activities.

Refuge staff will place brochures and two poster sized Refuge maps in the hotel lobby, and provide monthly listings of activities. The Refuge will also host an open house for hotel employees to acquaint them with the Visitor Center, located less than a quarter mile from the hotel.

This spring, the refuge plans to conduct a controlled burn on the prairie around the Visitor Center. The Refuge will provide the hotel with information about controlled burns and its impact on the prairie.

Minnesota Valley NWR is an urban refuge surrounded by the tourism industry. It's five minutes away from the Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport, Mall of America and numerous hotels. The plan's goal is to encourage hotel guests to become better acquainted with the Refuge and its mission.

Similar plans are being made to involve at least four other nearby hotels. (Judie Miller, Minnesota Valley NWR)

Moose from page 1

Recent Surveys Indicate Refuge Herd Now Numbers 50; Deer Numbers Increase slightly



Agassiz NWR Photo

Results from 1994-95 surveys indicated the population at 100 animals. The three-year research project on declining moose numbers is now in its last year.

By contrast, the surveys showed a slight increase in the area's deer population. The surveys recorded 504 deer, a 17 percent increase over last year's all-time low of 432. Relatively mild winters the past two years likely contributed to the increase.

The deer population goal for the Refuge is between 1,500 to 2,000 deer. The deer herd peaked at 3,000 animals in 1992. However, two extremely brutal winters, 1995-96 and 1996-97, contributed to the sharp decline.

Deer are the main prey species for resident wolves, and also provide hunting opportunities for the public. Hunting has been limited to bucks only the last two years. (Gary Huschle, Agassiz NWR)

OPERATION ARACHNID: Chicago Businessman Pays \$2,500 Penalty for Smuggling Live Tarantulas

A five-year investigation into the smuggling of live tarantulas by Service law enforcement agents concluded recently with the sentencing of a Chicago wildlife business owner in federal court. Bryant D. Capiz, owner of *Arachnocentric*, a wildlife import/export reseller, was

sentenced in U.S. District Court in Illinois to three years probation, required to enroll in alcohol treatment program and pay a \$2,500 penalty for smuggling live tarantulas, felony violation of the Lacey Act. Capiz's sentence concluded "Operation Arachnid," a five-year investigation that

resulted in the prosecution of three individuals, payments of \$14,400 in penalties, more than six years of probation, four months home confinement and 200 hours of community service. (*David L. Kirkby, Chicago LE office*)

Accomplishment Reports Received

The following reports were processed by the Accomplishment Reporting System March 11, 1999.

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|------|--|------|---|------|--|
| 289. | Necedah NWR Contacted by Discover Wisconsin TV Show
Jennifer Rabuck, Necedah NWR | 296. | Outreach: Status of Elm Lake Wolf Pack, Agassiz NWR
Gary Huschle, Agassiz NWR | 304. | Annual Deer Survey Shows Small Signs of Recovery
Gary Huschle Agassiz NWR |
| 290. | Section 404 Permit Denial
Ken Multerer, Reynoldsburg Field Office | 297. | Minnesota Valley NWR Takes CCP Process to the Public
Judie Miller, Minnesota Valley NWR | 305. | Horicon NWR Celebrates Volunteer Achievements
Molly Stoddard, Horicon NWR |
| 291. | Successful Environmental Toxicology Course
Lisa Williams, East Lansing Field Office | 298. | Refuge Initiates Communication with Local Hotels
Judie Miller, Minnesota Valley NWR | 306. | Horicon NWR Staff Host Meeting for Fox River NWR
Diane M. Kitchen, Horicon NWR |
| 292. | High Number of Seizures at Detroit Metro Airport
Carmen Parkes, Detroit Metro Airport LE | 299. | Outreach: Minnesota Moose Mystery, Agassiz NWR
Margaret Anderson, Agassiz NWR | 307. | Special Agents Honored by State Agency
Ed Spoon, Madison LE Office |
| 293. | Great Grizzlies!
Becky Goche, Shiawassee NWR | 300. | Helicopter Wolf Captures on Agassiz NWR
Gary Huschle Agassiz NWR | 308. | MOU Signed with MWA/NRCS/FWS in Minnesota
Lori Wolff, Minnesota Private Lands Office |
| 294. | Recruiting at Saginaw County Summer Youth Job Fair
Richard McAvinchey, Shiawassee NWR | 301. | Upper Mississippi Law Enforcement Coordination Meeting
James R. Fisher, UMRNW&FR | 309. | Presentation to the American Society of Appraisers
Keri Halpin, Chicago Inspection Program |
| 295. | Landscape Fair at Minnesota Valley NWR Draws a Crowd
Judie Miller, Minnesota Valley NWR | 302. | Outreach: February Presentations, Agassiz NWR
Margaret Anderson Agassiz NWR | 310. | FWS Participates in Miester and Mentors Program
Keri Halpin, Chicago Inspection Program |
| | | 303. | Agassiz Moose Population Continues to Decline
Gary Huschle Agassiz NWR | 311. | Television Covers Inspection of Live Cobra Shipment
Keri Halpin, Chicago Wildlife Inspection Program |

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| <p>312. FDA Training leads to first Rhino Label Act Seizure
Keri Halpin, Chicago Inspection Program</p> <p>313. Review of Great Lakes Piping Plover Recovery Plan
Rachel Miller, East Lansing Field Office</p> <p>314. Counties and Townships as Piping Plover Partners
Rachel Miller, East Lansing Field Office</p> <p>315. Tarantula Smuggler Sentenced
David L. Kirkby, Chicago LE - Investigations</p> <p>316. Sentencing for Sale of Endangered Species
David L. Kirkby, Chicago LE Investigations</p> <p>317. Outreach: Newspaper and Magazine
Margaret M. Anderson, Agassiz NWR</p> <p>318. Annual Congressional Staff Visits
Margaret M. Anderson, Agassiz NWR</p> | <p>319. Northern Tallgrass Prairie Bird Point Count Invent
Chuck Vukonich, Fergus Falls WMD</p> <p>320. Thief Bay Dike Rehabilitation Completed
Dave Bennett, Agassiz NWR</p> <p>321. G.L.B. Ecosystem Team Hosts Display at Outdoorama
Ed De Vries, Shiawassee NWR</p> <p>322. Special Agent Gives Presentation to UW Students
Ed Spoon, Madison LE Office</p> <p>323. USFWS Sponsors Student
Heather Enterline, Alpena FRO</p> <p>324. FWS Gives Presentations to MN Conservation Corps
Steve Erickson, Litchfield WMD</p> <p>325. Training for Minnesota Conservation Officers
SA S. Friberg St. Paul LE Office</p> <p>326. Bertrand Curator Assists in NPS Training
Sarah Tuttle, DeSoto NWR</p> <p>327. Completion of Lake Chautauqua HREP
Ross Adams, Chautauqua NWR</p> | <p>328. Refuge Force Account Team Work on Lake Chautauqua
Ross Adams, Chautauqua NWR</p> <p>329. Prairiegrass Restoration at Meredosia NWR
Ross Adams, Meredosia NWR</p> <p>330. Active Eagles Nest on Chautauqua NWR
Ross Adams, Chautauqua NWR</p> <p>331. Nesting Use Up in District's Hen House Program
Todd Luke, Litchfield WMD</p> <p>332. IMBD Agenda & Special Events Plan Completed
Ed Moyer, Minnesota Valley NWR</p> <p>333. MN Wetland Management Districts Implement GIS
Steve Kallin, Windom WMD</p> <p>334. New Waterfowl Production Area Purchased
Steve Kallin, Windom WMD</p> <p>335. Duck Habitat Days a Success
Steve Kallin, Windom WMD</p> <p>336. Habitat Restored in Heron Lake Watershed
Steve Kallin, Windom WMD</p> <p style="text-align: center;">■</p> |
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Inside Region 3

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Great Lakes
Big Rivers

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